



September 2005

Degree-Granting Institutions Act: Overview

HECB Information Item

This is an informational report to the members of the Higher Education Coordinating Board at its September 22 meeting. No board action is necessary at this time.

Overview

Under the state's Degree-granting Institutions Act (RCW 28B.85), the HECB is charged with protecting Washington consumers from substandard, fraudulent and deceptive activities at degree-granting colleges and universities in Washington.

The law offers four primary benefits:

- 1) Students attending post-secondary schools with the intention of earning a degree in Washington are guaranteed consumer protection under state law.
- 2) Employers who use academic credentials as part of the hiring process are able to rely on the credibility of the state's degree programs.
- 3) In the case of a school's closure, the state is able to intervene to preserve student records and offer some compensation for lost tuition and fees.
- 4) Information collected through the authorization process assists HECB staff in determining educational need within the state.

In Washington state, the HECB oversees all institutions that offer degrees unless they are considered "exempt" from board authorization.

In general, the exempt schools include all public colleges and universities, long-standing private institutions (such as Pacific Lutheran University), and schools that primarily offer religious training. All exempt schools are listed on the attached appendix.

All other schools that meet at least one of the following criteria must be authorized by the HECB under the terms of the Degree-granting Institutions Act:

- Offer degree programs or for-credit courses at or from a physical location in the state;
- Recruit or advertise specifically to Washington state residents;
- Offer distance-learning programs from within the state; and/or
- Maintain any type of physical presence in the state.

Institutions interested in offering degrees in Washington state must apply to the HECB for authorization. HECB staff review includes such areas as the institution's financial stability, business practices, academic programs, and faculty qualifications. However, the 50 schools that have been authorized cannot operate at will in the state. Authorization is program and site specific, and each program, as well as each teaching site, must be reviewed and authorized. Once authorized, schools are reviewed every two years.

In addition to the Degree-granting Institutions Act, the HECB is also responsible for implementing the Foreign Degree-granting Branch Campus Act (RCW 28B.90). That law applies to foreign colleges or universities that bring students enrolled in programs in the country of origin to Washington for brief periods of study.

Authorized Schools

- Authorized schools include new private schools beginning operation in Washington, as well as out-of-state schools that want to operate in the state.

There are currently 50 institutions authorized to operate in Washington, including 22 non-profit schools, 19 for-profit schools, and nine out-of-state public schools.

In total, these schools offer 346 programs of study, ranging from associate degrees through doctoral degrees. By type of study, the largest number of programs offered are in business (101 programs), followed by computer science (52 programs), social science (48 programs), and education (35 programs).

More than one-third of the programs (35 percent) are at the baccalaureate degree level, and another one-third (29 percent) are master's degree programs. Twenty-one percent of the programs are associate degree level, and the remaining 15 percent are either doctoral level or certificate programs offering college-level credit.

Most of the programs (63 percent) are offered exclusively from a physical location in Washington, and about a quarter are offered only through distance learning. The remaining 11 percent are offered as both site-based and distance-learning programs.

Enrollments at authorized schools range from a high of approximately 1,700 full-time equivalent students for University of Phoenix, to a low of three FTEs for Oregon Health and Science University.

The number of schools seeking authorization in Washington has grown steadily over the past few years – increasing from six schools between 1994 and 1998, to 23 schools between 1999 and 2004.

In addition, the number of requests by currently authorized institutions to offer additional programs is increasing.

Exempt Schools

- Certain schools are exempt from authorization under the Degree-granting Institutions Act.

Exemptions apply to all Washington public colleges and universities (40 schools); Washington-based independent schools that have been operating in the state and are accredited for a minimum of 15 years (20 schools); schools that offer programs that are strictly religious in nature (48 schools); tribally-controlled Native American schools (2); and schools that offer programs exclusively to federal employees and their dependents on a federal site (1).

The 48 schools currently offering programs that are religious in nature are reviewed every two years to ensure that they continue to qualify for exempt status.

As with authorization, no exemption is permanent, and all conditions under which the exemption was granted must remain in effect for the exemption to continue.

The number of schools seeking religious exemption has grown over the past few years – increasing from nine schools between 1994 and 1998, to 26 schools between 1999 and 2004.

Waived Schools

- The law also allows the HECB to waive authorization requirements in unique circumstances.

In general, these cases apply to those schools that offer limited courses to a select group of students. For example, the Oregon Institute of Technology offers courses exclusively to Boeing employees, at the company's request. The state currently has waived authorization requirements for four schools that operate in the state.

Future Activity

HECB staff are currently analyzing needed changes to the rules governing degree authorization. A notification of intent to change will be submitted to the board during the October 27 meeting.

Appendix

Authorized Institutions:

Antioch University
Apollo College
Argosy University Seattle
Aviation and Electronic Schools of America
Bainbridge Graduate Institute
Brigham Young University-Idaho
Capella University
Central Michigan University
Central Texas College
Chapman University
Collins College
Columbia College
DeVry University
DigiPen Institute of Technology
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center
Goddard College
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary
Golden Gate University
Grand Canyon University
Henry Cogswell College
Interface Computer School
International Academy of Design & Technology
ITT Technical Institute-Everett
ITT Technical Institute-Indianapolis
Kepler College
Lesley University
Lewis and Clark College
Mars Hill Graduate School
Moody Bible Institute
Northwest Aviation College
Nova Southeastern University
Old Dominion University
Oregon Health and Science University
Park University
Portland State University
Seattle Institute of Oriental Medicine
Southern Illinois University

Troy University
Universal Technical Institute
University of Phoenix
University of Portland
Vincennes University
Walden University
Webster University
Western Business College
Western Culinary Institute
Western Oregon University
Whidbey Writers Workshop
Wyoming Technical Institute

Exempt Institutions:

Art Institute of Seattle
Bastyr University
City University
Cornish College of the Arts
Crown College
Gonzaga University
Heritage University
ITT Technical Institute-Seattle
ITT Technical Institute-Spokane
Northwest College of Art
Northwest Indian College
Northwest University
Pacific Lutheran University
Puget Sound Christian College
Saint Martin's University
Salish Kootenai College
Seattle Pacific University
Seattle University
Trinity Lutheran College
Tulane University
University of Puget Sound
Walla Walla College
Whitman College
Whitworth College

Religious Exempt Institutions:

A.L. Hardy Academy of Theology	Triune Biblical University
Armour Bible College and Armour Seminary	The Washington Bible Institute
Bakke Graduate University of Ministry	Washington College and International Seminary
Calvary Chapel Bible College	Western Reformed Seminary
Calvary Spokane Bible College	Wisdom for Life School of Ministries
Calvary Lighthouse Bible Institute	Woolston-Steen Theological Seminary
Center for Ministry Preparation	The Worship Arts Conservatory
Christian Life School of Theology	
College for Global Deployment	
Columbia Evangelical Seminary	
Communion of Saints Seminary	
Covenant Bible Seminary	
Crossroads Bible College	
Destiny Ministry Training Center	
Dominion College	
Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary	
Full Gospel Northwest Bible College and Seminary	
Heart 4 the Nations Bible School and Ministry Training Center	
imago Dei institute/Cascade Bible College	
The Institute for Biblical Studies	
Institute for Christian Works	
International Graduate School of Ministry	
KAES Bible College & Seminary	
Keys Bible College	
Kristos Theological Seminary	
Living Faith Fellowship College of Ministry	
Lorian Association, The	
North Park Theological Seminary	
Northwest Baptist Seminary	
Northwest Theological Seminary	
Oklahoma Baptist University	
Pacific Seminary	
Pacific Theological Seminary	
Portland Bible College	
Renewed Life Seminary	
School of Ministry Arts	
Seattle Bible College	
Shepherds Bible College	
Sound Baptist Bible College	
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Tacoma Bible College	